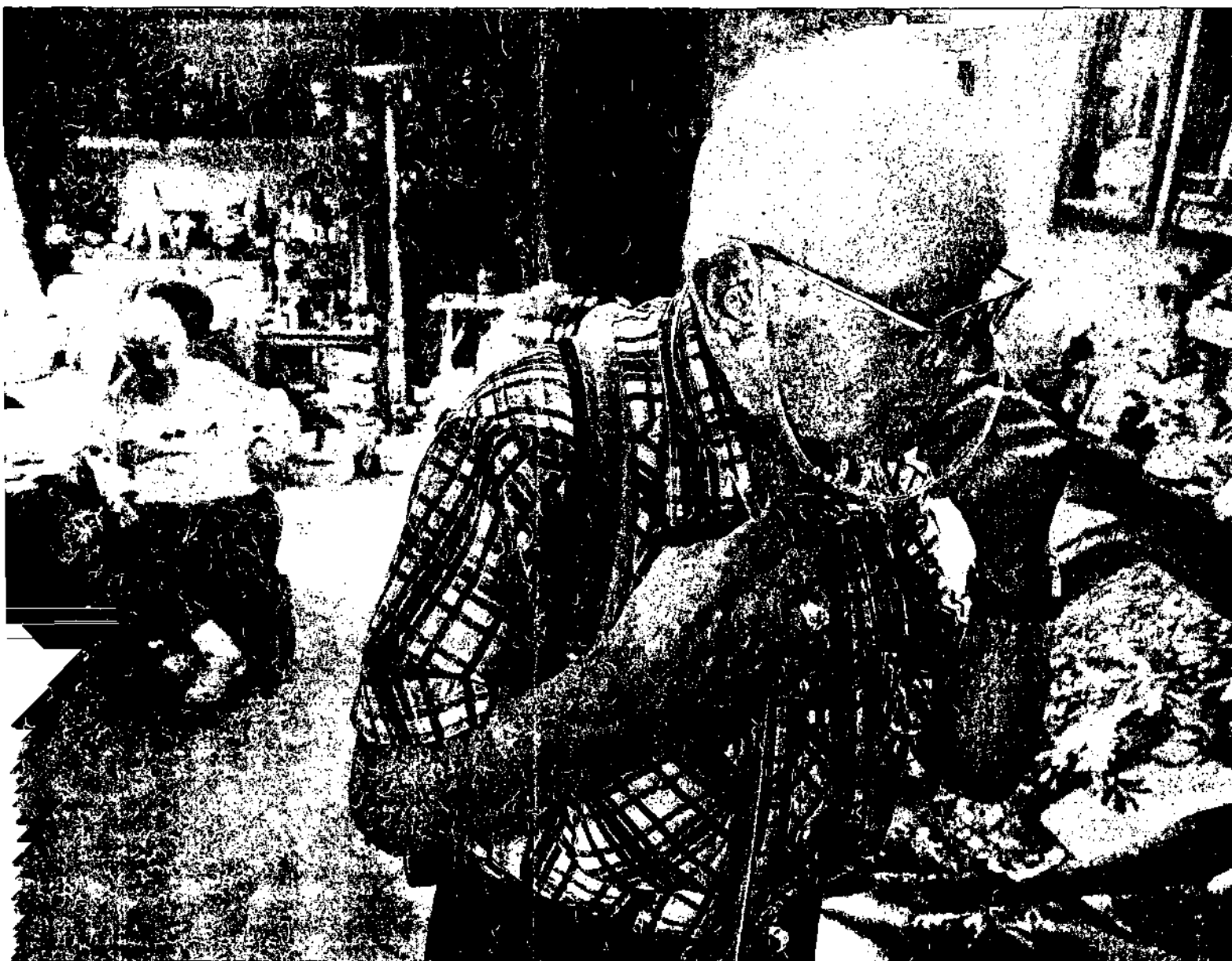


Libby's legacy

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Chris Jordan photos/Daily Inter Lake

removes his oxygen line while his wife Dorothy sits in her wheelchair. Both have asbestosis and have to use oxygen to help with their ability to be active in bowling leagues and community activities, but now they spend most of their time inside their Libby home.

Is it better or for worse?

Libby couple relinquish active lifestyle to deal with asbestosis

with a smile. "I'm the chauffeur and the go-fer," says Wayne. His only exposure to the toxic tremolite asbestos fibers from the vermiculite mine was from working in the yard and garden. "We used Zonolite a lot in the gardens. It was good for the soil,"

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"I was a POW. You learn a lot of stuff there," he said.

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By LYNNETTE HINTZE
The Daily Inter Lake

LIBBY — Wayne and Dorothy Kittilson bought a new motor home four years ago to travel in style. They haven't used it even once, but Wayne won't sell it.

"I'll keep it 'til the day I die," he stated.

The motor home represents the freedom to be out and about, an icon of their past pleasures.

They also had big plans for their pontoon boat — it now sits idle in the yard.

Once one of the busiest senior couples in Libby, the Kittilsons now are both tethered to oxygen bottles and Dorothy is confined to a wheelchair.

Asbestosis and its complications have taken over their lives.

"I'm still hanging on," Wayne said

with a smile. "I'm the chauffeur and the go-fer."

His only exposure to the toxic tremolite asbestos fibers from the vermiculite mine was from working in the yard and garden.

"We used Zonolite a lot in the gardens. It was good for the soil," Dorothy noted.

Her first husband, Harold "Grub" Day, died in the mid-1970s. He worked at the W.R. Grace mine when it was Zonolite for 12 years.

"They said he had bone cancer, but he died of lung cancer," said Dorothy, 88. "We always felt he died from asbestosis."

She was exposed to the asbestos from the dirty clothes Grub would wear home from the mine. "I used to scrape that stuff off his pant legs," she recalled.

Dorothy and Wayne met by accident after haggling for years over the

telephone about a tax issue on property Wayne's brother owned on Angel Island. Dorothy and her first husband owned a cabin there, and she was secretary of a homeowners association.

"I fought with her for five years to not have to pay back taxes on the lot," Wayne recalled. "One day I was playing cards at the senior center and she came in. I asked her, 'Are you THAT Dorothy?' and she said, 'Yep.'"

The two hit it off and married in 1981. They traveled extensively and were avid bowlers.

These days, Dorothy struggles not only with fluid in her lungs from asbestosis, but also with arthritis in her shoulders and other health problems.

Wayne, 82, had heart surgery in 1975, 1985 and 1995 and had a pacemaker put in this year. He spent 16 months in a German prison camp during World War II, and said it will

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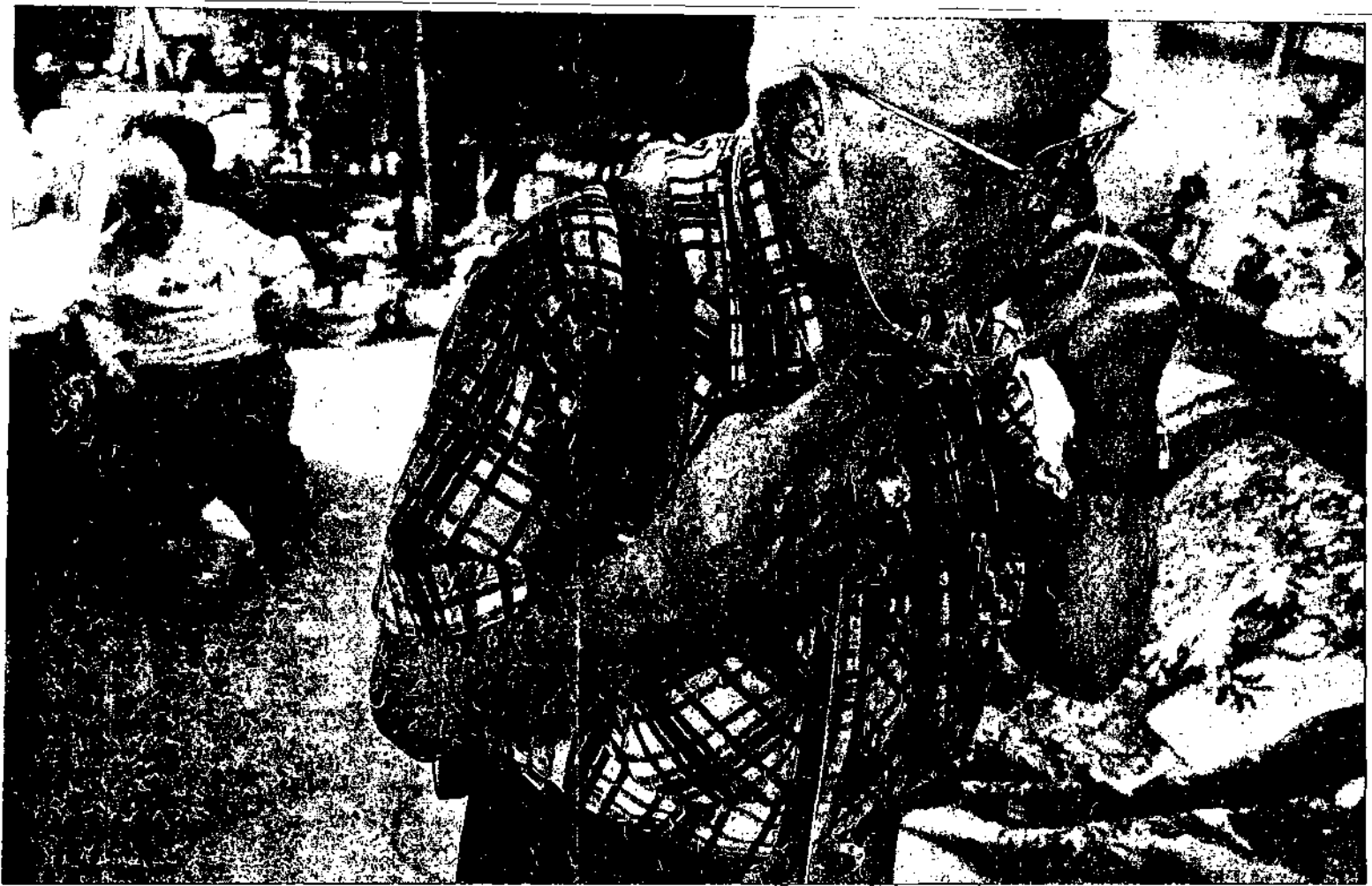
"I was a POW. I had a lot of stuff there," he said. "The Kittilsons are a kind of people, in the positive piece. Dorothy's 10 children and grandchildren have to focus on."

Some of her children have asbestosis disease; she does not yet.

"When we got it better or for worse, what the worse was," Wayne said, wink.

"Well, you have them come," she said.

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Chris Jordan photos/Daily Inter Lake

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take more than asbestos disease to get him down.

"I was a POW. You learn a lot of stuff there," he said.

The Kittilsons are "glass half full" kind of people, intent on looking for the positive pieces in their lives. Dorothy's 10 children from her previous marriage have yielded ample grandchildren and great-grandchildren to focus on.

Some of her children have signs of asbestos disease; some don't, at least not yet.

"When we got married, it was for better or for worse. She didn't tell me what the worse was going to be," Wayne said, winking at Dorothy.

"Well, you have to take things as they come," she replied.

Features editor Lynnette Hintze may be reached at 758-4421 or by e-mail at lhintze@dailyinterlake.com

Even though Wayne is 82, he is still active in the community.

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